



MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

ANALYSIS OF COMPARISON CITIES

RESEARCH REQUEST

- Staff asked to research the following:
 - What is impact of council governance on election outcomes?
 - In particular, what council governance features, if any, may lead to more competitive elections?

KEY TERMS

- **Plurality voting** – A candidate does not need to receive a majority (50%+1) to win; he/she need only receive the most votes among the other candidates.
- **Majority voting** – A candidate must get 50%+1 to win; usually accompanied by a runoff if no candidate exceeds 50%+1
- **By-Place Election** – An election where candidates file for a specific seat and voters may only choose 1 candidate for that race. May be by plurality or runoff
- **Field Election** – An election where candidates file for a specific office and voters may choose up to the number of seats to be filled (e.g., if 3 seats are vacant, a voter may choose up to 3 candidates); only by plurality.

KEY TERMS

- **Mayor-Council** – Cities with elected mayor and council; may be weak or strong mayor
- **Council-Manager** – Cities with an elected council and an appointed city manager
- **Consolidated Mayor-Council** – City/County consolidated council (aka, unigov)
- **Partisan Elections** – Elections that identify a candidate on the ballot as a member of a political party
- **Nonpartisan Elections** – Elections that do not identify a candidate's political affiliation

KEY TERMS

- **Top/Lower Ranked Cities** – Ranked based on the Best Cities Index
- **Ward Elections (No At-Large)** – Cities with only wards.
- **Ward Elections (At-Large By-Place)** – Cities with ward and at-large elections, which are by place
- **Ward Elections (At-Large Field)** – Cities with ward and at-large elections which are by field

METHODOLOGY

- Benchmark Top 25 Cities in the US
- Collected original election data for the previous cycle(s) covering all CMs in that city
- Total of 405 council seats included in the analysis

TOP 25 CITIES

Austin	Los Angeles
Boston	Memphis
Charlotte	Nashville
Chicago	New York
Columbus	Philadelphia
Dallas	Phoenix
Denver	San Antonio
Detroit	San Diego
El Paso	San Francisco
Fort Worth	San Jose
Houston	Seattle
Indianapolis	Washington, DC
Jacksonville	

ELECTIONS OVERVIEWS

- 36% of cities have staggered terms; 64% elect all councilmembers in a single year election
- 80% of cities have election in odd-numbered years; 20% of cities – primarily in CA – have elections in even years

DATA SUMMARY

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF CITIES	2015 POP	TOTAL CM	RATIO, CM TO POP	BEST CITIES INDEX
Mayor-Council	9	684,451	13	109,006	30
Council-Manager	8	979,369	11	101,937	40
Consolidated Mayor-Council	6	860,602	22	68,090	43
Top Ranked Cities	13	850,106	11	96,625	10
Lower Ranked Cities	12	1,084,062	14	90,166	57
Partisan Elections	7	868,031	17	87,155	42
Nonpartisan Elections	18	864,816	11	96,471	34
Ward Elections (No At-Large)	6	2,057,737	20	125,766	40
Ward Elections (At-Large By-Place)	10	947,470	9	119,174	42
Ward Elections (At-Large Field)	7	677,116	9	60,534	19
At-Large, By Place Election	10	947,470	3	94,747	42
At-Large, Field Election	7	677,116	4	96,731	19
ALL	25	864,816	13	93,525	38
Columbus	-	850,106	7	121,444	30

MARGIN OF VICTORY

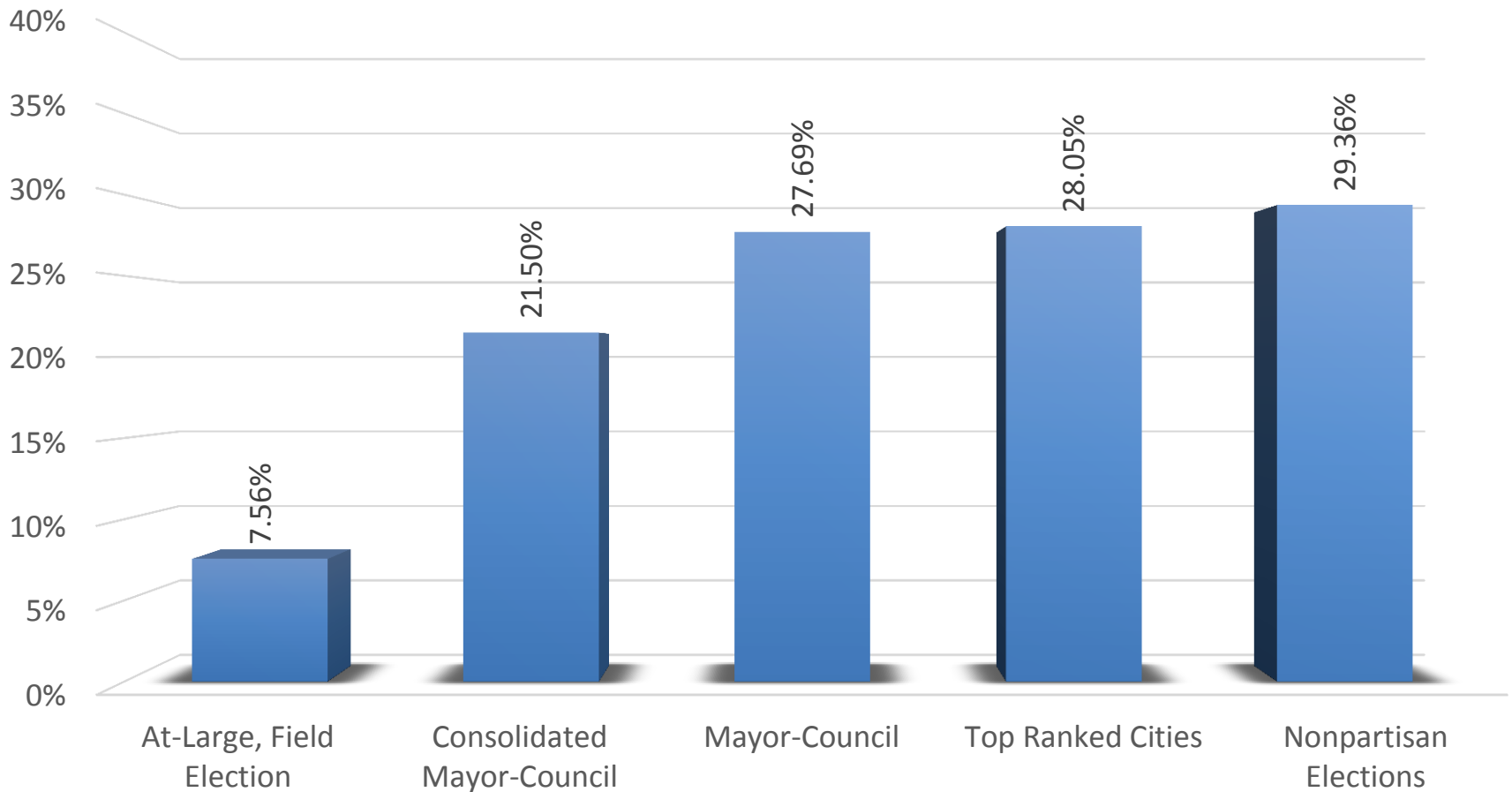
- Margin of victory is the difference between the winner and next-closest challenger
- A lower margin indicates more competitive elections
- Margins for plurality races are typically lower than 50%+1 elections

MARGIN OF VICTORY

CATEGORY	MARGIN OF VICTORY
Columbus	5.20%
At-Large, Field Election	7.56%
Consolidated Mayor-Council	21.50%
Mayor-Council	27.69%
Top Ranked Cities	28.05%
Nonpartisan Elections	29.36%
At-Large, By Place Election	32.05%
ALL	33.03%
Ward Elections (At-Large By-Place)	33.66%
Ward Elections (No At-Large)	35.07%
Lower Ranked Cities	38.02%
Council-Manager	38.36%
Partisan Elections	41.95%
Ward Elections (At-Large Field)	53.75%

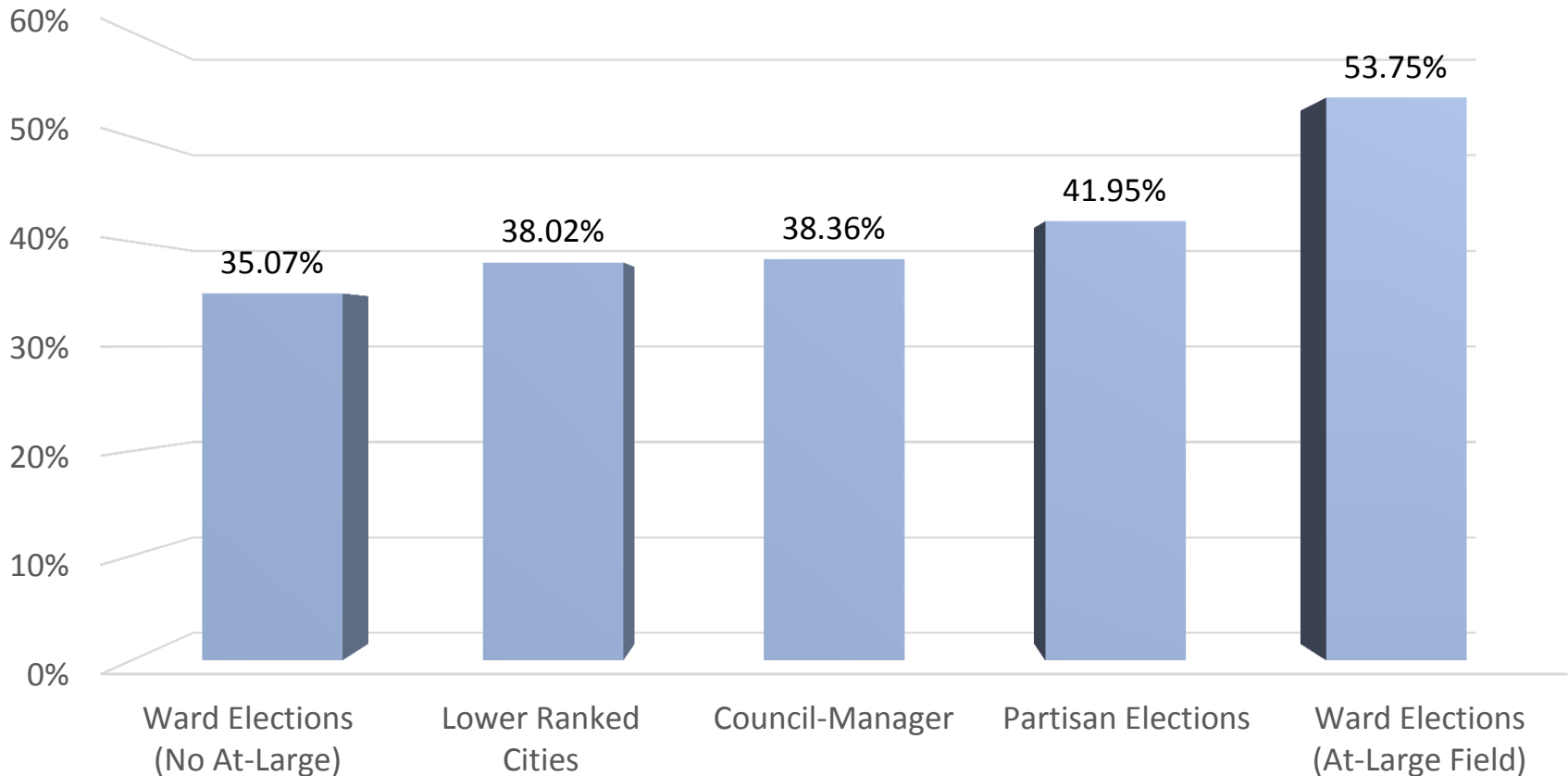
LOWEST MARGIN OF VICTORY

The lowest margin of victory is associated with:

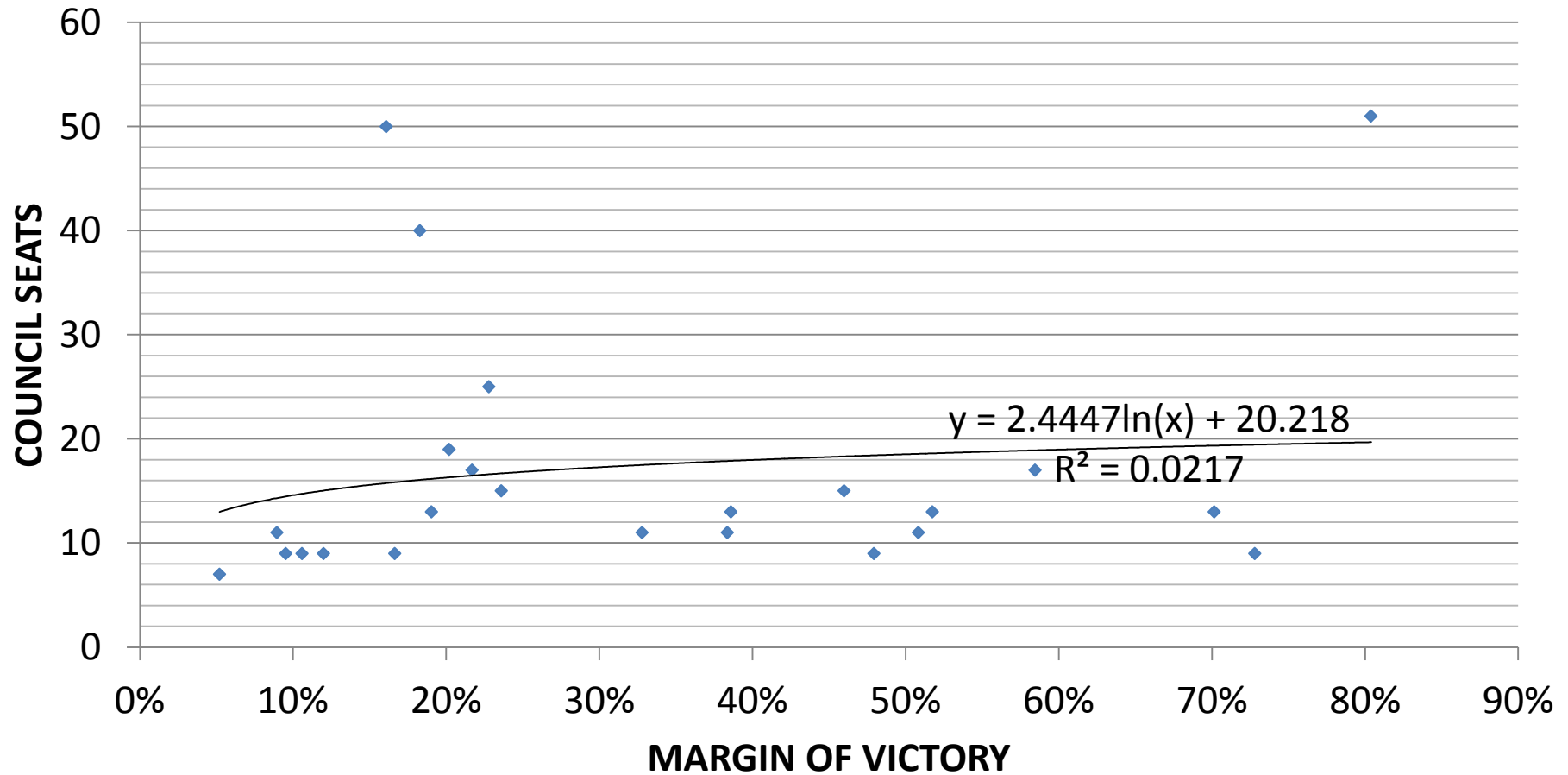


HIGHEST MARGIN OF VICTORY

The highest margin of victory is associated with:

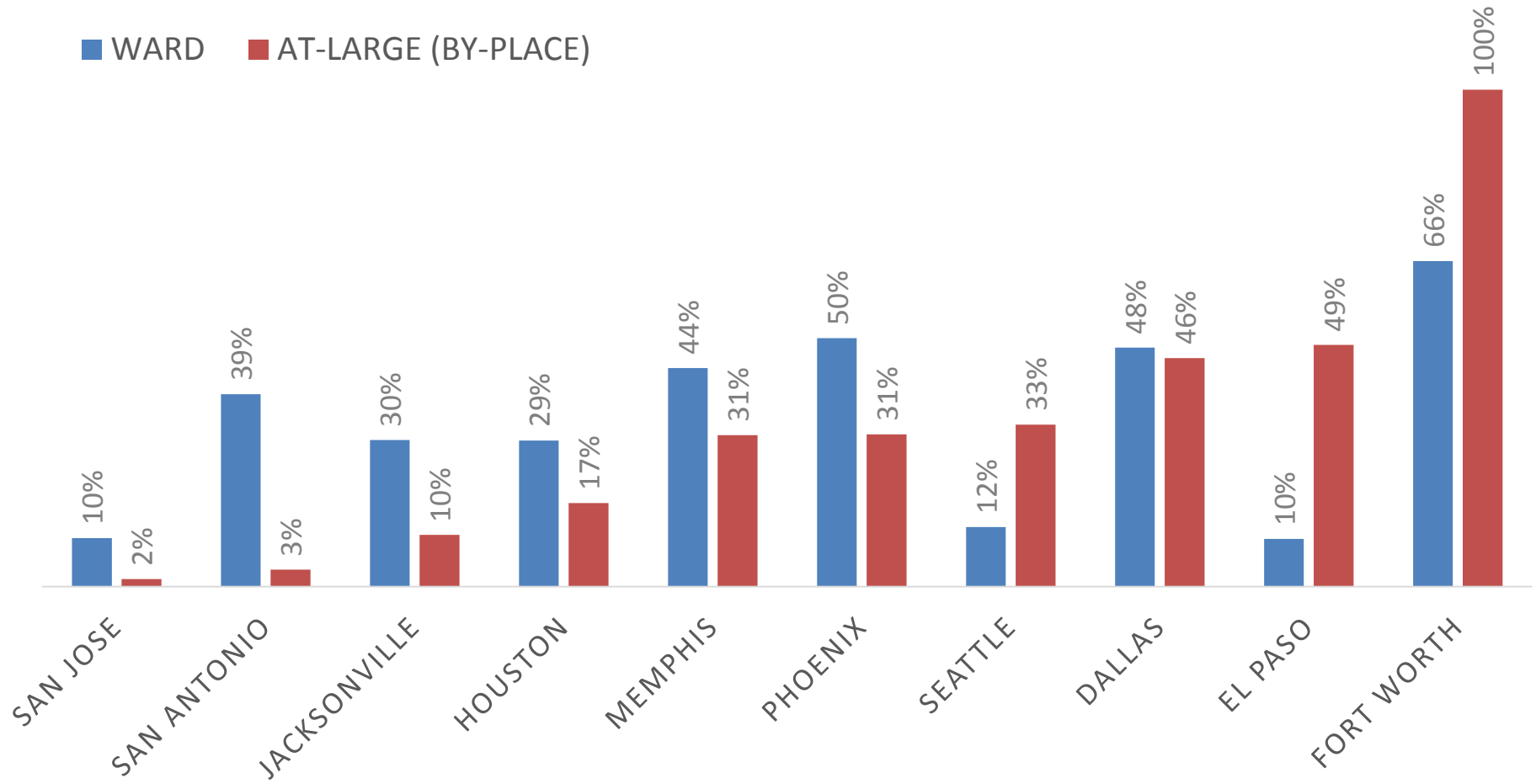


RELATIONSHIP, MARGIN OF VICTORY AND COUNCIL SIZE

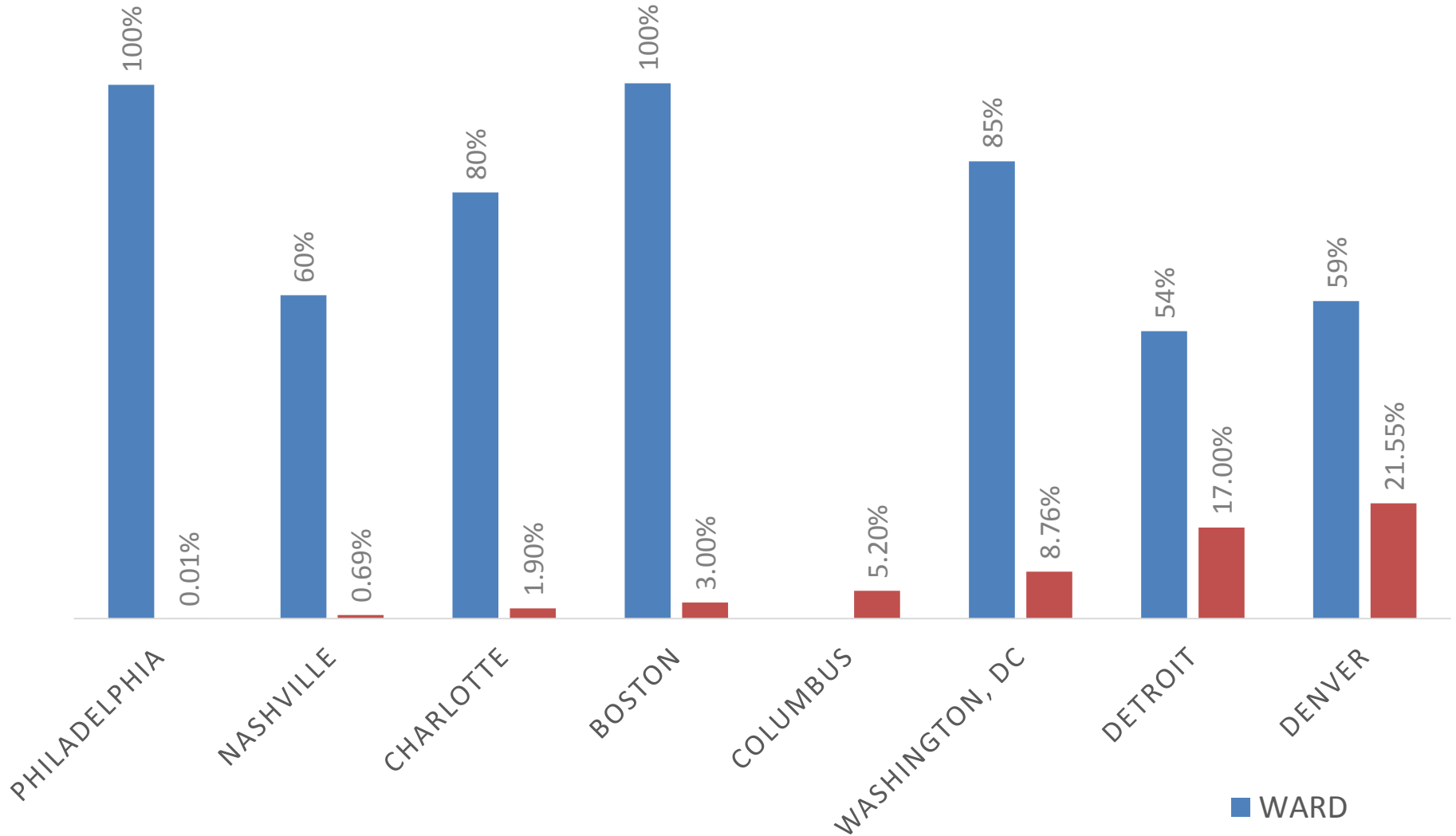


MARGIN OF VICTORY, HYBRID COUNCIL WARD AND BY-PLACE

■ WARD ■ AT-LARGE (BY-PLACE)



MARGIN OF VICTORY, HYBRID COUNCIL WARD AND AT-LARGE



CONTESTED RACES

- Refers to races where more than one candidate appears on the ballot for the general election
- In a runoff-election system, only one candidate appears on the ballot in the general and there is no runoff
- In a primary-election system, only one candidate appears on the ballot in the general election

CONTESTED RACES

CATEGORY	CONTESTED
At-Large, Field Election	100.00%
Columbus	100.00%
Mayor-Council	92.58%
At-Large, By Place Election	90.00%
Ward Elections (No At-Large)	88.72%
Top Ranked Cities	85.33%
Nonpartisan Elections	84.15%
ALL	83.48%
Partisan Elections	81.88%
Lower Ranked Cities	81.64%
Consolidated Mayor-Council	80.86%
Ward Elections (At-Large By-Place)	67.40%
Council-Manager	66.67%
Ward Elections (At-Large Field)	64.19%

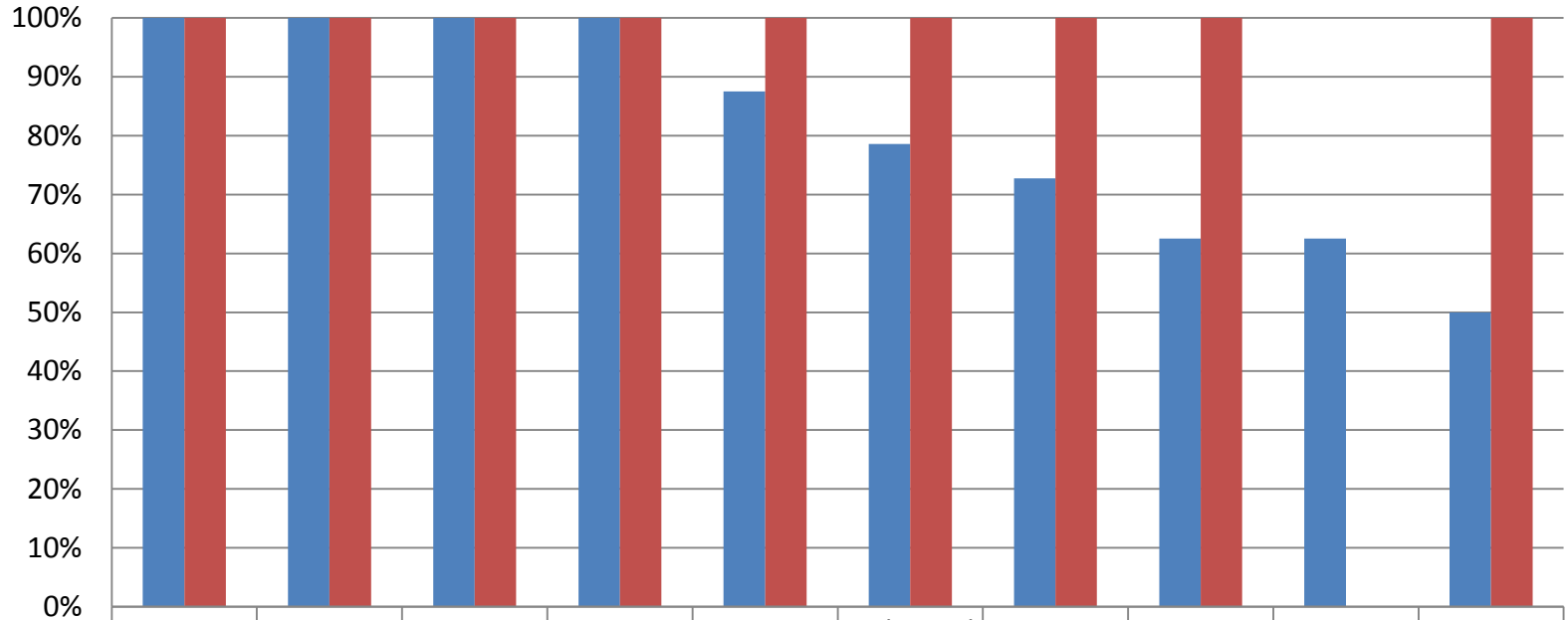
MOST CONTESTED RACES

- The most contested races are associated with the following:
 - At-Large Field Elections
 - Mayor-Council governance (municipal only)
 - At-Large By-Place Election

LEAST CONTESTED RACES

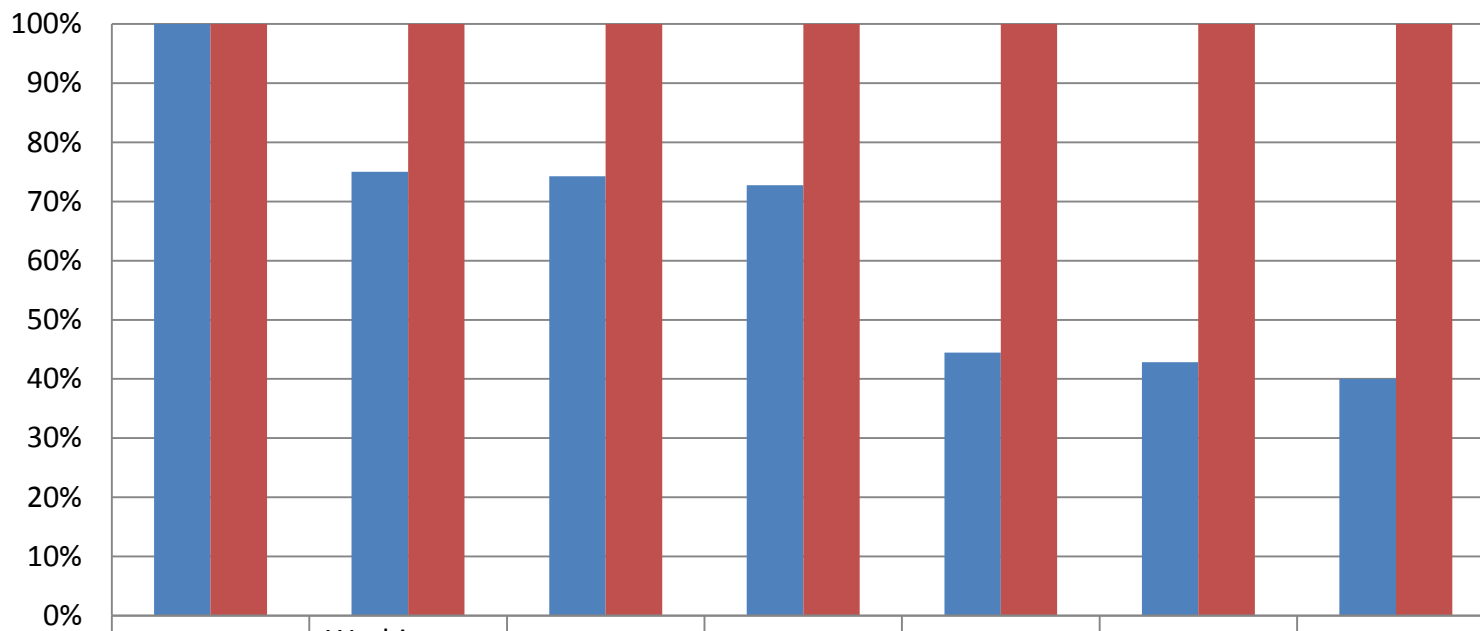
- The least contested races are associated with the following:
 - Ward elections in cities with Hybrid Ward/At-Large Field councils
 - Council-Manager cities
 - Ward elections in cities with Hybrid Ward/At-Large By-Place councils

CONTESTED ELECTIONS, HYBRID COUNCIL WARD AND BY-PLACE

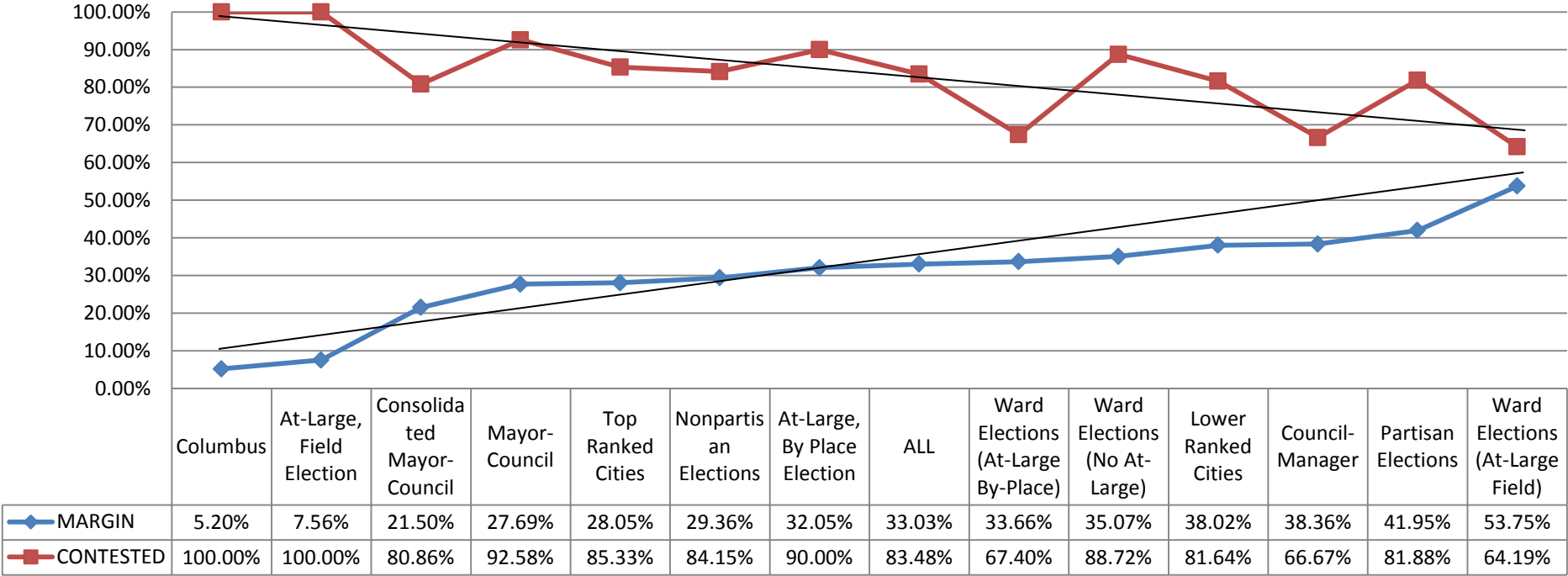


0%	Memphis	San Antonio	San Jose	Seattle	El Paso	Jacksonville	Houston	Phoenix	Fort Worth	Dallas
WARD	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	87.50%	78.57%	72.73%	62.50%	62.50%	50.00%
AT-LARGE (BY-PLACE)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%

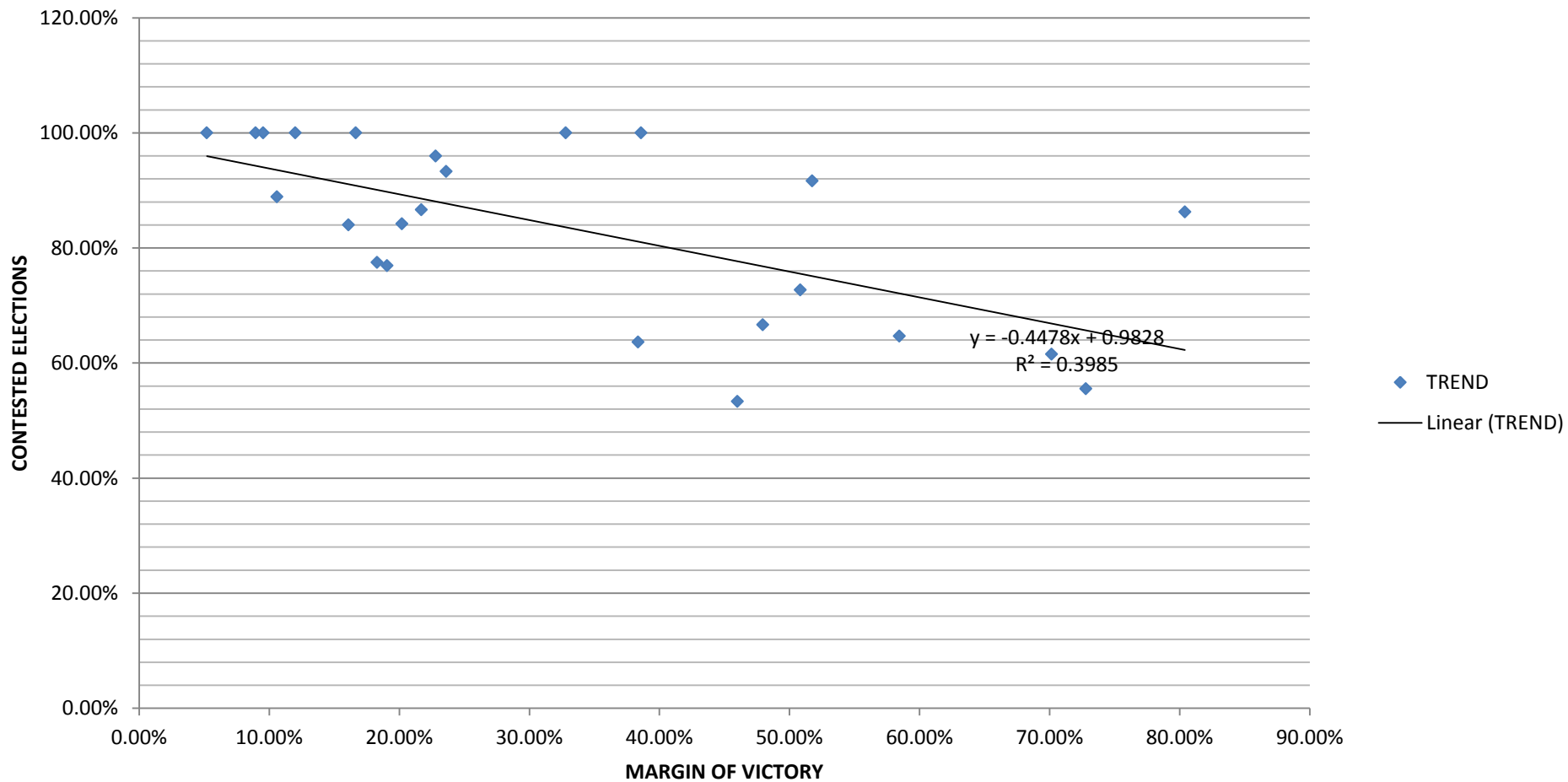
MARGIN OF VICTORY, HYBRID COUNCIL WARD AND AT-LARGE

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TREND, MARGIN OF VICTORY AND CONTESTED ELECTIONS



RELATIONSHIP, CONTESTED ELECTIONS AND MARGIN OF VICTORY



MOST COMPETITIVE

- At-Large, Field Election
- Mayor-Council
- Top Ranked Cities
- At-Large, By Place Election
- Nonpartisan Elections

LEAST COMPETITIVE

- Lower Ranked Cities
- Ward Elections (At-Large By-Place)
- Partisan Elections
- Council-Manager
- Ward Elections (At-Large Field)

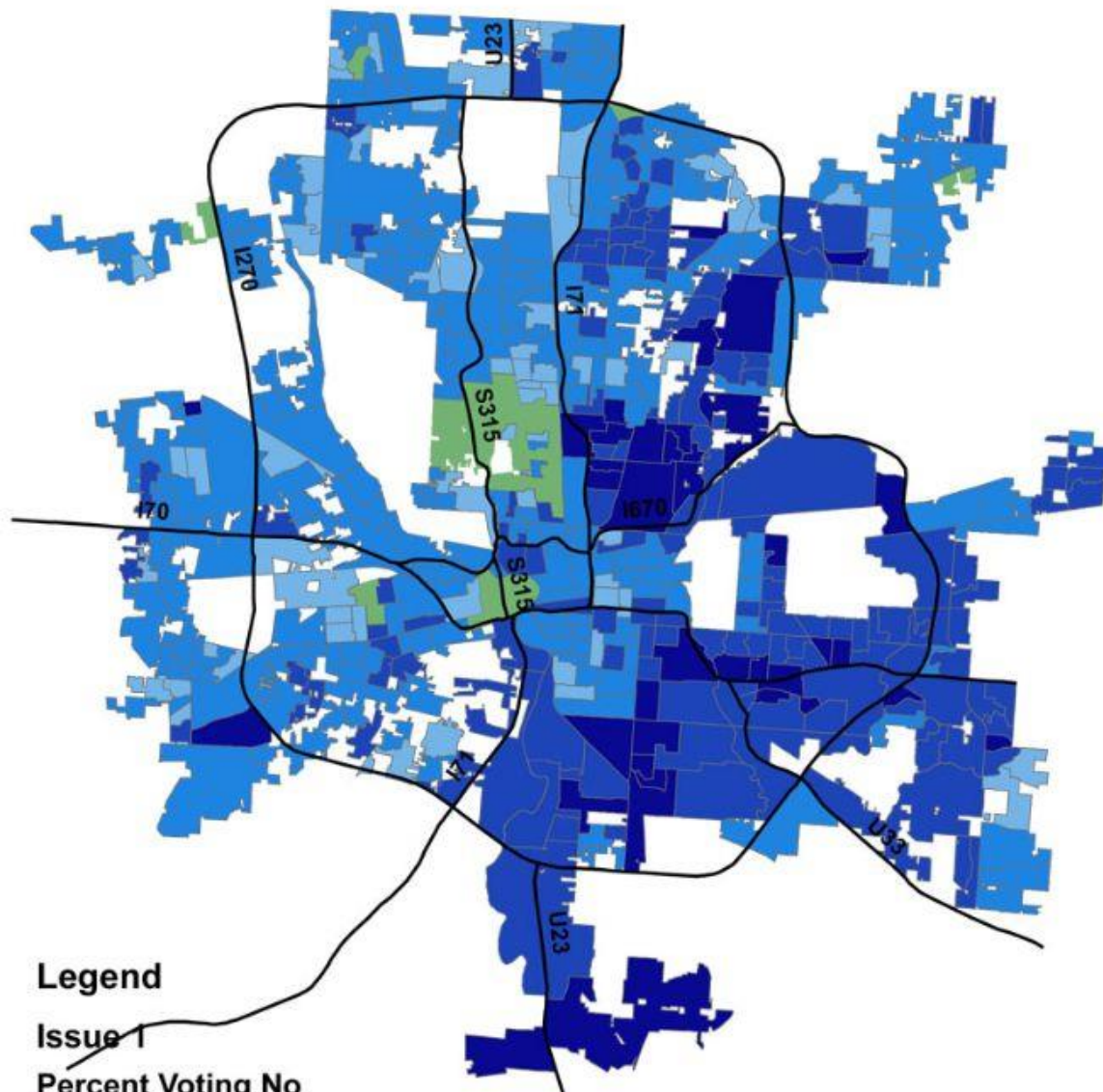
FINAL THOUGHTS





ISSUE 1

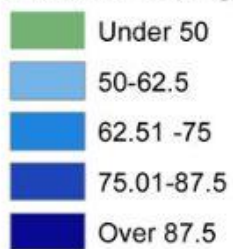
ANALYSIS OF ISSUE 1 IN COLUMBUS

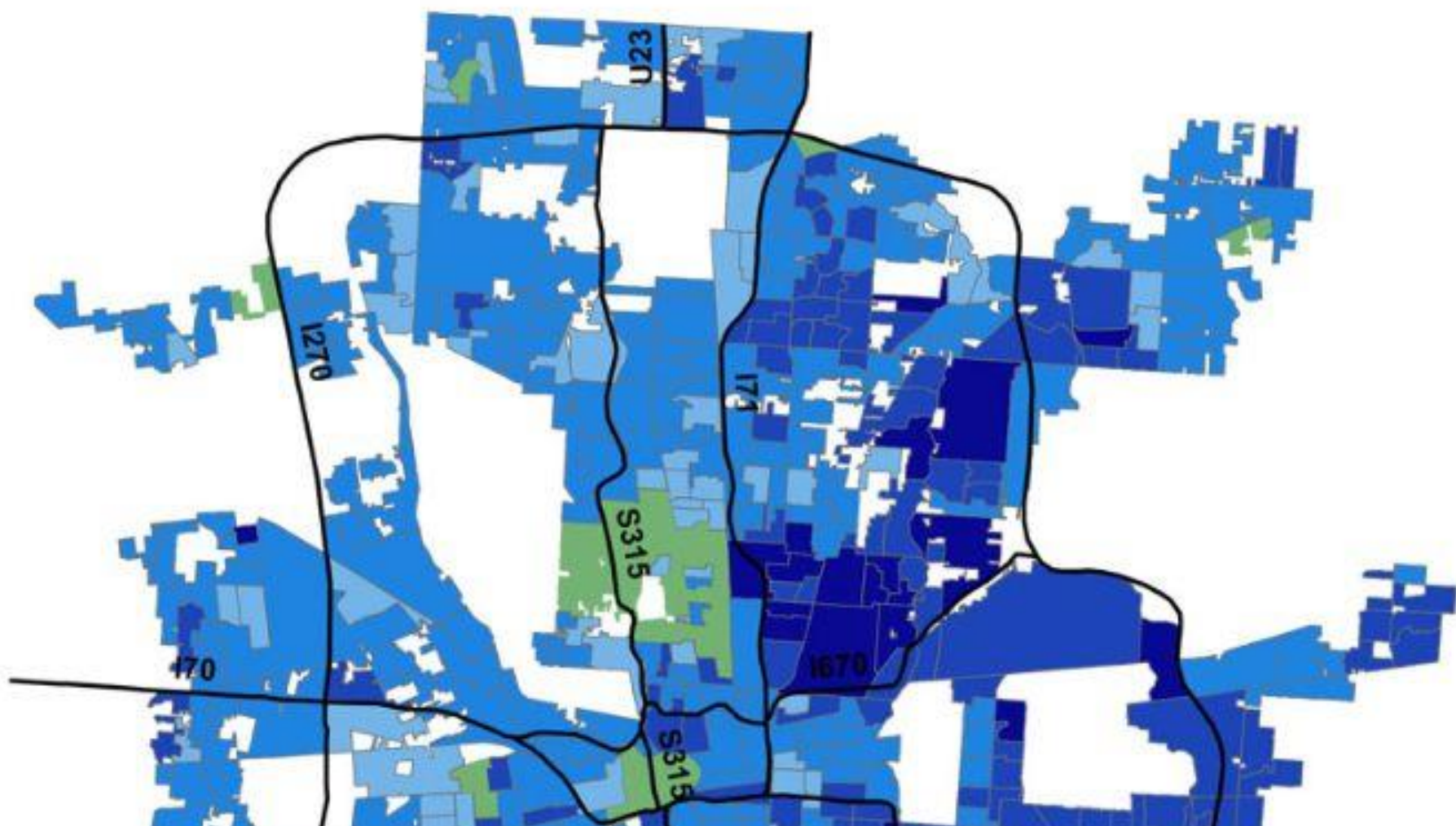


Legend

Issue 1

Percent Voting No

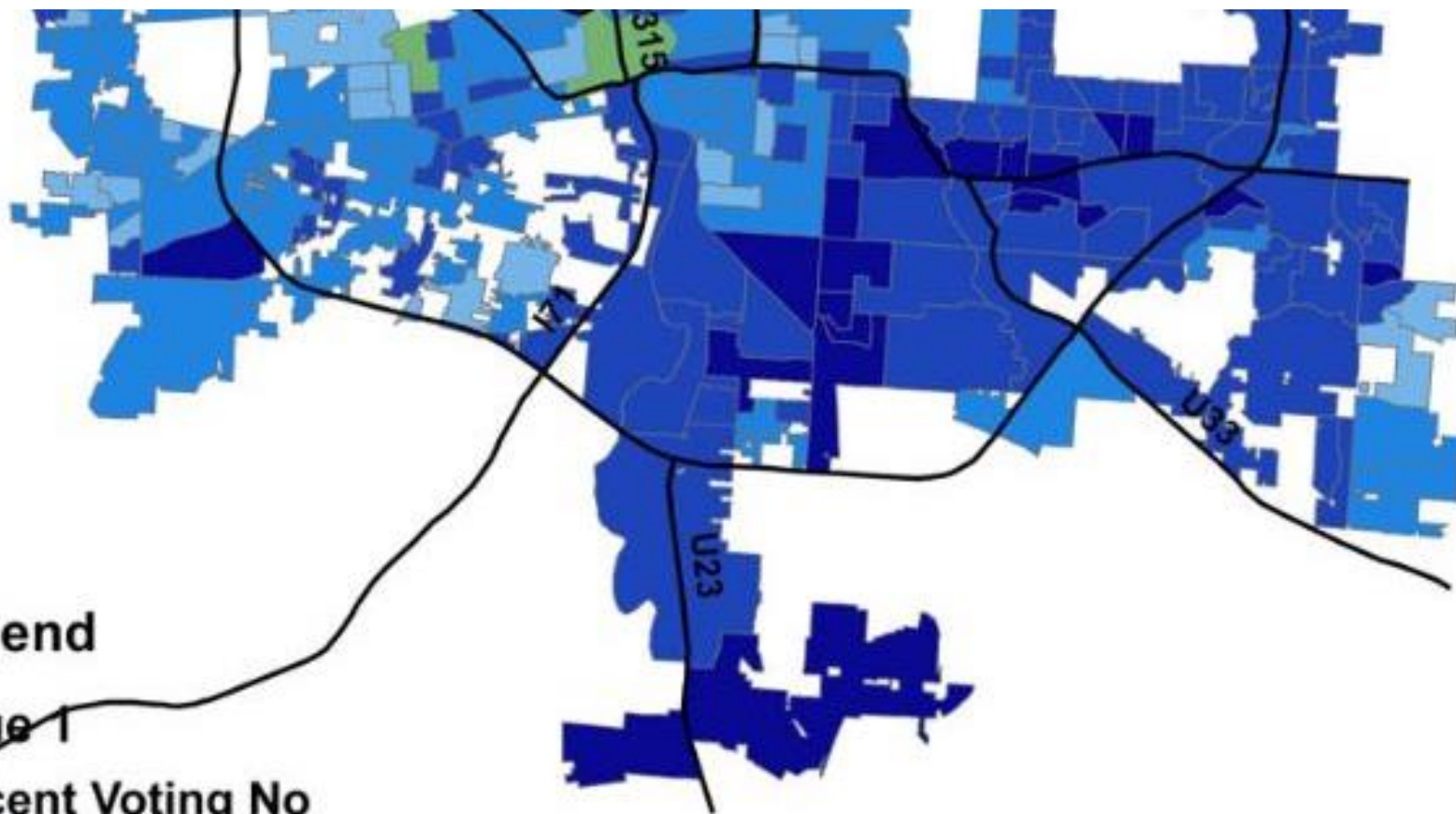
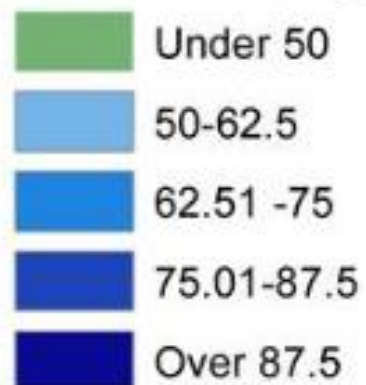




Legend

Issue 1

Percent Voting No



ISSUE 1 BREAKDOWN

- Cost: \$1,300,000 for a special election
- Voter Turnout: 9.37%
- Outcome: Issue 1 failed 71.4% to 28.6%
 - The largest defeat in Columbus' history
 - Next closest was 1984 amendment to civil service (defeated 68.2%-31.8%)
 - Previous ward issues failed 60%-40%

ISSUE 1 BREAKDOWN

- Precinct Breakdown (505):
 - 95% of Columbus Precincts voted against Issue 1
 - 481 Precincts voted **against** Issue 1
 - 24 Precincts voted **for** Issue 1